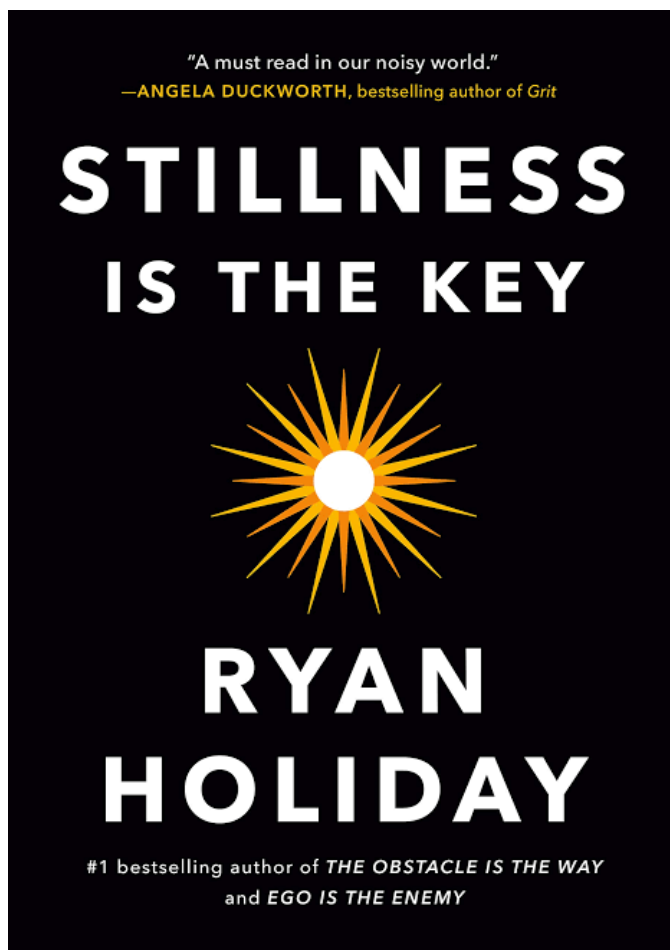


# Stillness Is the Key by Ryan Holiday



## Purpose of the Book

*“The struggle is great, the task divine—to gain mastery, freedom, happiness, and tranquility.” — Epictetus*

“The aim of this book is simply to show how to uncover and draw upon the stillness we already possess. It’s about the cultivation of and the connection to that powerful force given to us at birth, the one that has atrophied in our modern, busy lives. This book is an attempt to answer the pressing question of our time: If the quiet moments are the best moments, and if so many wise, virtuous people have sung their praises, why are they so rare?”

- “A flash of stillness is not what we’re after. We want consistent focus and wisdom that can be called upon in even the most trying situations. Getting there will require more work. It’s going to require some holistic self-examination, treating the disease and not just the symptoms.”
- “It is an attainable path to enlightenment and excellence, greatness and happiness, performance as well as presence, for *every kind of person*.”

- “The premise of this book is that our three domains—the mind, the heart, and the body—must be in harmony. The truth is that for most people not only are these domains out of sync, but they are at war with each other.”
  - *Mind*: “We must learn to think rationally and clearly about our own fate.”
  - *Spirit*: “We must find spiritual meaning and goodness while we are alive.”
  - *Body*: “We must treat the vessel we inhabit on this planet well—or we will be forced to abandon it early.”
- “Different traditions offer different prescriptions for the good life. The Stoics urged determination and iron self-will. The Epicureans preached relaxation and simple pleasures. The Christians spoke of saving mankind and glorifying God. The French, a certain *joie de vivre*. The happiest and most resilient of us manage to incorporate a little of each of these approaches into our lives.”
- “The one thing you can’t escape in your life is *yourself*.”
- “Build a life that you don’t need to escape from.”

Stillness is the key . . .

- To thinking clearly.
- To seeing the whole chessboard.
- To making tough decisions.
- To managing our emotions.
- To identifying the right goals.
- To handling high-pressure situations.
- To maintaining relationships.
- To building good habits.
- To being productive.
- To physical excellence.
- To feeling fulfilled.
- To capturing moments of laughter and joy.
- To being a better parent, a better artist, a better human being.
- To unlocking all that we are capable of in this life.

The Essence of Stillness

*“You may be sure that you are at peace with yourself when no noise reaches you, when no word shakes you out of yourself.” — Seneca*

“(Stillness is) a powerful idea made all the more transcendent by the remarkable fact that nearly every other philosophy of the ancient world—no matter how different or distant—came to the exact same conclusion.”

- “The philosophical schools separated by vast oceans and distances...developed unique paths to the same critical destination: The stillness required to become master of one’s own life.”
- “The Buddhist word for it was *upekkha*. The Muslims spoke of *aslama*. The Hebrews, *hishtavut*. The second book of the Bhagavad Gita, the epic poem of

the warrior Arjuna, speaks of *samatvam*, an ‘evenness of mind—a peace that is ever the same.’ The Greeks, *euthymia* and *hesychia*. The Epicureans, *ataraxia*. The Christians, *aequanimitas*. In English: *stillness*. To be steady while the world spins around you... To tap into the *dao* and the *logos*. The Word. The Way. Buddhism. Stoicism. Epicureanism. Christianity. Hinduism. It’s all but impossible to find a philosophical school or religion that does not venerate this inner peace—this *stillness*—as the highest good and as the key to elite performance and a happy life. And when basically *all* the wisdom of the ancient world agrees on something, only a fool would decline to listen.“

- “To Seneca and to his fellow adherents of Stoic philosophy, if a person could develop peace within themselves—if they could achieve *apatheia*, as they called it—then the whole world could be at war, and they could still think well, work well, and be well.”
- “While the magnitude and urgency of our struggle is modern, it is rooted in a timeless problem. Indeed, history shows that the ability to cultivate quiet and quell the turmoil inside us, to slow the mind down, to understand our emotions, and to conquer our bodies has always been extremely difficult.”
- “It’s ironic that stillness is rare and fleeting in our busy lives, because the world creates an inexhaustible supply of it. It’s just that nobody’s looking.”
- “In *noticing*, we become alive to the stillness.”

## Stillness Paradoxes

“*All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.*”  
— *Blaise Pascal*

“Mastering our mental domain—as paradoxical as it might seem—requires us to step back from the rigidity of the word ‘mastery.’ We’ll get the stillness we need if we focus on the individual steps, if we embrace the process, and give up chasing. We’ll think better if we aren’t thinking so *hard*.”

- “If we can clear space, if we can consciously empty our mind... insights and breakthroughs happen... There is a beautiful paradox to this idea of void. The *Daodejing* points out that when clay is formed around emptiness, it becomes a pitcher that can hold water. Water from the pitcher is poured into a cup, which is itself formed around emptiness. The room this all happens in is itself four walls formed around emptiness. Do you see? By relying on what’s not there, we actually have something worth using.“
- “Stillness is not an excuse to withdraw from the affairs of the world. Quite the opposite—it’s a tool to let you do more good for more people.”
- “Stillness, then, is actually a way to superior performance.”
- “The closer we get to mastery, the less we care about specific results.”
- “There is, on the surface, a contradiction here. On the one hand, the Buddhists say we must empty our minds to be fully present. We’ll never get anything done if we are paralyzed by overthinking. On the other hand, we must look and think and study deeply if we are ever to truly *know*.”

## Oneness & Interconnectedness

*“All that you behold, that which comprises both god and man, is one—we are the parts of one great body.” — Seneca*

“Whether it comes from the perspective of space, a religious epiphany, or the silence of meditation, the understanding that we are all connected—that we are all one—is a transformative experience.”

- “He wanted them—the leaders, the people who are supposed to work on behalf of their fellow citizens—to have the same realization he was having: the realization that we are all one, that we are all in this together, and that this fact is the only thing that truly matters.” (Astronaut Edgar Mitchell on viewing Earth from space, also known as the overview effect)
- “The Greeks spoke of *sympatheia*, the kind of mutual interdependence and relatedness of all things, past, present, and future. They believed that each person on this planet had an important role to play, and should be respected for it.”
- “Finding the universal in the personal, and the personal in the universal, is not only the secret to art and leadership and even entrepreneurship, it is the secret to centering oneself. It both turns down the volume of noise in the world and tunes one in to the quiet wavelength of wisdom that sages and philosophers have long been on.”

## Higher Power(s)

*“To become empty is to become one with the divine—this is the Way.” — Awa Kenzo*

“When nearly all the wise people of history agree, we should pause and reflect. It’s next to impossible to find an ancient philosophical school that does not talk about a higher power (or higher powers).”

- “To the Stoics, their higher power was the *logos*—the path of the universe. They acknowledged fate and fortune and the power these forces had over them...In Chinese philosophy, *dao*—the Way—is the natural order of the universe, the way of a higher spirit. The Greeks not only believed in many different gods, but also that individuals were accompanied by a *daemon*, a guiding spirit that led them to their destiny.”
- “The Confucians believed in Tian—a concept of heaven that guided us while we were here on earth and assigned us a role or purpose in life. The Hindus believed that Brahman was the highest universal reality. In Judaism, Yahweh is the word for Lord. Each of the major Native American tribes had their own word for the Great Spirit, who was their creator and guiding deity.”

- “The Christian word for this term is *agape*. It is the ecstasy of love from a higher power, the sheer luck and good fortune of being made in that image.”
- “The progress of science and technology is essential. But for many of us moderns, it has come at the cost of losing the capacity for awe and for acknowledging forces beyond our comprehension. It has deprived us of the ability to access spiritual stillness and piety.”
- “It is probably not a coincidence that when one looks back at history and marvels at the incredible adversity and unimaginable difficulty that people made it through, you tend to find that they all had one thing in common: Some kind of belief in a higher deity. An anchor in their lives called faith. They believed an unfailing hand rested on the wheel, and that there was some deeper purpose or meaning behind their suffering even if they couldn’t understand it. It’s not a coincidence that the vast majority of people who did good in the world did too.”
- “The point of this belief is in some ways to override the mind. To quiet it down by putting it in true perspective. The common language for accepting a higher power is about ‘letting (Him or Her or It) into your heart.’ That’s it. This is about rejecting the tyranny of our intellect, of our immediate observational experience, and accepting something bigger, something beyond ourselves.”

## Spirituality & Consciousness

*“Tao is in the emptiness. Emptiness is the fast of the mind.” — Zhuang Zhou*

“The work we must do next is less cerebral and more spiritual. It’s work located in the heart and in the soul, and not in the mind. Because it is our soul that is the key to our happiness (or our unhappiness), contentment (or discontent), moderation (or gluttony), and stillness (or perturbation).”

- “In Stoicism and Buddhism and countless other schools that we find the same analogy: The world is like muddy water. To see through it, we have to let things settle. We can’t be disturbed by initial appearances, and if we are patient and still, the truth will be revealed to us.”
- “Being present demands all of us. It’s not nothing. It may be the hardest thing in the world.”
- In Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism, the lotus flower is a powerful symbol. Although it rises out of the mud of a pond or a river, it doesn’t reach up towering into the sky—it floats freely, serenely on top of the water. It was said that wherever Buddha walked, lotus flowers appeared to mark his footprints. In a way, the lotus also embodies the principle of letting go. It’s beautiful and pure, but also attainable and lowly. It is simultaneously attached and detached. This is the balance we want to strike.
- “An old Zen proverb...Chop wood, carry water. Chop wood, carry water. Chop wood, carry water. Don’t overanalyze. Do the work.”
- “The goal of Zen...was to ‘achieve a void . . . noiseless, colorless, heatless void’—to get to that state of emptiness.”

- “One of the best stories in Zen literature is a series of ten poems about a farmer and his trouble with a bull. The poems are an allegory about conquering the self, and the titles of each one map out the journey that each of us must go on: We search for the bull, we track the footprints, we find it, we catch it, we tame it, we ride it home.”
- “*More* does nothing for the one who feels *less than*, who cannot see the wealth that was given to them at birth, that they have accumulated in their relationships and experiences. Solving your problem of poverty is an achievable goal and can be fixed by earning and saving money. No one could seriously claim otherwise. The issue is when we think these activities can address *spiritual poverty*.”
- “The term for this is *exstasis*—a heavenly experience that lets us step outside ourselves. And these beautiful moments are available to us whenever we want them. All we have to do is open our souls to them.”

## Being vs Doing

*“Movement is the foundation of stillness.” — Lao Tzu*

“High-minded thoughts and inner work are one thing, but all that matters is what you *do*. The health of our spiritual ideals depends on what we do with our bodies in moments of truth.”

- “It’s human being, not human doing, for a reason.”
- “We have to be active for the stillness to have any meaning.”
- “This will take effort. Because we will not simply *think* our way to peace. We can’t pray our soul into better condition. We’ve got to move and live our way there. It will take our body—our habits, our actions, our rituals, our self-care—to get our mind and our spirit in the right place, just as it takes our mind and spirit to get our body to the right place.”
- “It is a painful crossroads. Or worse, one that we ignore, stuffing those feelings of existential crisis down, piling on top of them meaningless consumption, more ambition, and the delusion that doing more and more of the same will eventually bring about different results.”
- “We were not put on this planet to be worker bees, compelled to perform some function over and over again for the cause of the hive until we die.”
- “Work will not set you free. It will kill you if you’re not careful.”
- “Man is *not* a beast of burden.”

## Virtue

*“What am I doing with my soul? Interrogate yourself, to find out what inhabits your so-called mind and what kind of soul you have now.” — Marcus Aurelius*

“What is virtue? Seneca would ask. His answer: ‘True and steadfast judgment.’ And from virtue comes good decisions and happiness and peace. It emanates from the soul and directs the mind and the body.”

- “Virtue, the Stoics believed, was the highest good—the *summum bonum*—and should be the principle behind all our actions. Virtue is not holiness, but rather moral and civic excellence in the course of daily life. It’s a sense of pure rightness that emerges from our souls and is made real through the actions we take.”
- “For Aristotle, virtue wasn’t just something contained in the soul—it was how we lived. It was what we did. He called it *eudaimonia*: human flourishing.”
- “The East prized virtue as much as the West. The *Daodejing*, for instance, actually translates as *The Way of Virtue*. Confucius, who advised many of the rulers and princes of his day, would have agreed with Marcus that a leader was well served by the pursuit of virtue. His highest compliment would have been to call a ruler a *junzi*—a word that translators still have trouble finding equivalents for in English but is roughly understood as a person who emanates integrity, honor, and self-control.”
- “What we need then is a philosophy and a strong moral code—that sense of virtue—to help us resist what we can, and to give us the strength to pick ourselves back up when we fail and try to do and be better.”
- “Virtue is not an abstract notion...We are doing it to live better and *be* better. Every person we meet and every situation we find ourselves in is an opportunity to prove that.”

## Wisdom

*“I cannot understand how some people can live without communicating with the wisest people who ever lived on earth.” — Tolstoy*

“Each school has its own take on wisdom, but the same themes appear in all of them: The need to ask questions. The need to study and reflect. The importance of intellectual humility. The power of experiences—most of all failures and mistakes—to open our eyes to *truth* and *understanding*.”

- “All philosophical schools preach the need for wisdom. The Hebrew word for wisdom is *chokmâh*; the corresponding term in Islam is *hikma*, and both cultures believe that God was an endless source of it. The Greek word for wisdom was *sophia*, which in Latin became *sapientia* (and why man is called *Homo sapiens*). Both the Epicureans and the Stoics held *sophia* up as a core tenet. In their view, wisdom was gained through experience and study. Jesus advised his followers to be as wise as snakes and as innocent as doves. Proverbs 4:7 holds acquiring wisdom to be the most important thing people can do. The Buddhists refer to wisdom as *prajñā*, and took wisdom to mean the understanding of the true nature of reality. Confucius and his followers spoke constantly of the cultivation of wisdom, saying that it is achieved in the same way that a craftsman develops skill: by putting in the time.”

## Deep Thinking

*“Learning must never cease. . . . The noble person who studies widely and examines himself each day will become clear in his knowing and faultless in his conduct.” —  
Xunzi*

“We have to get better at thinking, deliberately and intentionally, about the big questions. On the complicated things. On understanding what’s really going on with a person, or a situation, or with life itself. We have to do the kind of thinking that 99 percent of the population is just not doing, and we have to stop doing the destructive thinking that they spend 99 percent of their time doing.”

- “*Satori*—an illuminating insight when the inscrutable is revealed, when an essential truth becomes obvious and inescapable.”
- “The eighteenth-century Zen master Hakuin was highly critical of teachers who believed that enlightenment was simply a matter of thinking nothing. Instead, he wanted his students to think really, really hard. This is why he assigned them perplexing kōans like ‘What is the sound of one hand clapping?’ and ‘What did your face look like before you were born?’ and ‘Does the dog have the Buddha nature?’ These questions defy easy answers, and that’s the point. By taking the time to meditate on them deeply, in some cases for days and weeks or even years, students put their mind in such a clarified state that deeper truths emerge, and enlightenment commences (and even if they don’t get all the way there, they are stronger for having tried).”
- “Which is why each of us needs to sit down and examine ourselves. What do we stand for? What do we believe to be essential and important? What are we really living for? Deep in the marrow of our bones, in the chambers of our heart, we know the answer. The problem is that the busyness of life, the realities of pursuing a career and surviving in the world, come between us and that self-knowledge.”

## Slowness

*“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” — Proverbs 16:32*

“Your job, after you have emptied your mind, is to slow down and think. To really think, on a regular basis.”

- “Our stillness depends on our ability to slow down and choose not to be angry, to run on different fuel. Fuel that helps us win and build, and doesn’t hurt other people, our cause, or our chance at peace.”
- “Our best and most lasting work comes from when we take things slow.”



- “As marksmen say these days, ‘Slow is smooth, smooth is fast.’”
- “These are answers that must be fished from the depths. And what is fishing but slowing down? Being both relaxed and highly attuned to your environment? And ultimately, catching hold of what lurks below the surface and reeling it in?”
- “You don’t solve a maze by rushing through. You have to stop and think. You have to walk slowly and carefully, reining in your energy—otherwise you’ll get hopelessly lost. The same is true for the problems we face in life.”
- “Get lost. Be unreachable. Go *slowly*.”
- “The green light is a powerful symbol in our culture. We forget what Mr. Rogers was trying to make us see—that the yellow light and the red light are just as important. Slow down. *Stop*.”

## Silence & Solitude

*“To pray and work in the morning and to labor and rest in the afternoon, and to sit still again in meditation in the evening when night falls upon that land and when the silence fills itself with darkness and with stars. This is a true and special vocation. There are few who are willing to belong completely to such silence, to let it soak into their bones, to breathe nothing but silence, to feed on silence, and to turn the very substance of their life into a living and vigilant silence.” — Thomas Merton*

“People don’t have enough silence in their lives because they don’t have enough solitude. And they don’t get enough solitude because they don’t seek out or cultivate silence. It’s a vicious cycle that prevents stillness and reflection, and then stymies good ideas, which are almost always hatched in solitude.”

- “If we want to think better, we need to seize these moments of quiet. If we want more revelations—more insights or breakthroughs or new, big ideas—we have to create more room for them.”
- “If solitude is the school of genius, as the historian Edward Gibbon put it, then the crowded, busy world is the purgatory of the idiot.”
- “In solitude time slows down, and while we might find that speed hard to bear at first, we will ultimately go crazy without this check on the busyness of life and work. And if not driven crazy, we will certainly miss out.”
- “Each of us needs to put ourselves, physically, in the position to do that kind of deep work.”
- “(Thomas) Merton eventually came to understand that after so much time by himself in the woods, he now possessed solitude inside himself—and could access it anytime he liked. The wise and busy also learn that solitude and stillness are there in pockets, if we look for them.”

## Essentialism

*“A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.” — Herbert Simon*

“In his Meditations, Marcus Aurelius says, “Ask yourself at every moment, ‘Is this necessary?’” Knowing what not to think about. What to ignore and not to do. It’s your first and most important job.”

- “In order to think clearly, it is essential that each of us figures out how to filter out the inconsequential from the essential. It’s not enough to be inclined toward deep thought and sober analysis; a leader must create time and space for it.”
- “The important stuff will still be important by the time you get to it. The unimportant will have made its insignificance obvious (or simply disappeared). Then, with stillness rather than needless urgency or exhaustion, you will be able to sit down and give what deserves consideration your *full* attention.”
- “‘Eisenhower Box,’ a matrix that orders our priorities by their ratio of urgency and importance. Much that was happening in the world or on the job, Eisenhower found, was urgent but not important. Meanwhile, most of what was truly important was not remotely time-sensitive. Categorizing his inputs helped him organize his staff around what was important versus what *seemed* urgent, allowed them to be strategic rather than reactive, a mile deep on what mattered rather than an inch on too many things.”
- “*L’essentiel est invisible pour les yeux*. What’s essential is invisible to the eye.”
- “We are incapable of seeing what is essential in the world if we are blind to what’s going on within us.”
- “Remember, that’s what time is. It’s your life, it’s your flesh and blood, that you can never get back.”
- “When we know what to say no to, we can say yes to the things that matter.”

Choice

*“Life is meaningless to the person who decides their choices have no meaning.” — Ryan Holiday*

“The gift of free will is that in this life we can choose to be good or we can choose to be bad. We can choose what standards to hold ourselves to and what we will regard as important, honorable, and admirable. The choices we make in that regard determine whether we will experience peace or not.”

- “You can’t run away from your choices—you can only fix them with better choices.”

Enough

*“Nothing is enough for the man to whom enough is too little.” — Epicurus*

“What do we want more of in life? That’s the question. It’s not accomplishments. It’s not popularity. It’s moments when we feel like we are enough.”

- “Temperance. That’s the key. Intellectually, we know this. It’s only in flashes of insight or tragedy that we *feel* it.”
- “The best insights on enough come to us from the East.”
- “The Western philosophers wrestled with the balance between getting more and being satisfied.”

## Leisure

*“This is the main question, with what activity one’s leisure is filled.” — Aristotle*

“When most of us hear the word ‘leisure,’ we think of lounging around and doing nothing. In fact, this is a perversion of a sacred notion. In Greek, ‘leisure’ is rendered as *scholé*—that is, *school*. Leisure historically meant simply freedom from the work needed to survive, freedom *for* intellectual or creative pursuits. It was learning and study and the pursuit of higher things.”

- “As society advanced and jobs became increasingly less physical, but more exhausting mentally and spiritually, it became common for leisure to include a diverse array of activities, from reading to woodwork.”
- “In his essay on leisure, Josef Pieper wrote that “the ability to be ‘at leisure’ is one of the basic powers of the human soul.” But that’s what’s so interesting about it. It’s a physical state—a physical *action*—that somehow replenishes and strengthens the soul. Leisure is not the absence of activity, it *is* activity.”
- “It’s in this leisure, Ovid observed, that ‘we reveal what kind of people we are.’”

## Gratitude

*“When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you.” — Lao Tzu*

“We find in people who have their spiritual house in order, a calmness and a humility that comes with understanding not just the many people who have contributed to their success and well-being, but the sheer good luck that has allowed the human species to even come into existence.”

- “The need for of progress can be the enemy of enjoying the process.”
- “The aim of a good gratitude practice...is to eliminate that creeping and toxic entitlement which is at the root of so much of our misery. By seeing *how much is going right*, we protect ourselves from frustration when much goes wrong. By

regularly stopping to remember all that has been done for us by other people...we inoculate ourselves against ego.”

- “The Stoics saw gratitude as a kind of medicine—a way to still the anguish and anger that rises up within us. To them, saying ‘Thank you’ for every experience...was the key to mental health. ‘Convince yourself that everything is the gift of the gods,’ Marcus said, ‘that things are good and always will be.’ This isn’t always easy to do, obviously, but then again most medicine doesn’t taste good. The point is the cure and the relief that comes after.”

## Old Soul

*“Most of us would be seized with fear if our bodies went numb, and would do everything possible to avoid it, yet we take no interest at all in the numbing of our souls.” — Epictetus*

“In our modern culture, we tend to associate getting older with a hardening of one’s heart, with becoming more conservative, but it needn’t be this way. In fact, it’s a process we can willingly undergo—physically and psychologically—and be better for it.”

- “A few years ago, the technologist and psychologist Sep Kamvar ran a bit of a social experiment in the form of an amazing project where he scraped millions of pieces of data from social media and texts from blog posts and found that young people and old people define happiness in distinct ways. Young people tend to speak about happiness in terms of excitement. Older people tend to speak about happiness in terms of peacefulness. For young people, happiness was accomplishment. For their elders, it was contentment.”
- “In short, they have the benefit of perspective.”

## 5 Life Hacks from *Stillness is the Key* by Ryan Holiday

### 1. Start Journaling

“The list of people, ancient and modern, who practiced the art of journaling is almost comically long and fascinatingly diverse.”

- “Michel Foucault talked of the ancient genre of *hupomnemata* (notes to oneself). He called the journal a ‘weapon for spiritual combat.’”
- “The best journals...aren’t for the reader. They are for the writer. To slow the mind down. To wage peace with oneself.”
- “*How* you journal is much less important than *why* you are doing it.”

## 2. Go on Walks

“How does *walking* get us closer to stillness?...it is repetitive, ritualized motion. It is deliberate. It is an exercise in peace.”

- “Kierkegaard believed that sitting still was a kind of breeding ground for illness. But walking, *movement*, to him was almost sacred. It cleansed the soul and cleared the mind in a way that primed his explorations as a philosopher. Life is a path, he liked to say, we have to walk it.”
- “The Buddhists talk of ‘walking meditation,’ or *kinhin*, where the movement after a long session of sitting, particularly movement through a beautiful setting, can unlock a different kind of stillness than traditional meditation.”
- “The Japanese have a concept, *shinrin yoku*—forest bathing—which is a form of therapy that uses nature as a treatment for mental and spiritual issues.”

## 3. Build a Routine

“When we not only automate and routinize the trivial parts of life, but also make automatic good and virtuous decisions, we free up resources to do important and meaningful exploration. We buy room for peace and stillness, and thus make good work and good thoughts accessible and *inevitable*.”

- “The truth is that a good routine is not only a source of great comfort and stability, it’s the platform from which stimulating and fulfilling work is possible.”
- “Routine, done for long enough and done sincerely enough, becomes more than routine. It becomes *ritual*—it becomes sanctified and holy.”
- “The greats know that complete freedom is a nightmare. They know that order is a prerequisite of excellence and that in an unpredictable world, good habits are a safe haven of certainty.”
- “To make that possible, you must go now and get your house in order. Get your day scheduled. Limit the interruptions. Limit the number of choices you need to make.”
- “A master is in control. A master has a system. A master turns the ordinary into the sacred.”

## 4. Get Rid of Your Stuff

“We don’t need to get rid of all our possessions, but we should constantly question what we own, why we own it, and whether we could do without.”

- “Mental and spiritual independence matter little if the things we own in the physical world end up owning us.”
- “Mo’ money, mo’ problems, and also mo’ stuff, less freedom.”
- “There is also what we can term ‘comfort creep.’ We get so used to a certain level of convenience and luxury that it becomes almost inconceivable that we used to live without it. As wealth grows, so does our sense of ‘normal.’”
- “Don’t use your money to purchase loneliness, or headaches, or status anxiety.”

- “You were born free—free of stuff, free of burden.”
- “Epicurus once said that the wise will accomplish three things in their life: leave written works behind them, be financially prudent and provide for the future, and cherish country living. That is to say, we will be reflective, we will be responsible and moderate, and we will find time to relax in nature.”

## 5. Get More Sleep

“People say, ‘I’ll sleep when I’m dead,’ as they hasten that very death, both literally and figuratively. They trade their health for a few more working hours. They trade the long-term viability of their business or their career before the urgency of some temporal crisis.”

- “We have only so much energy for our work, for our relationships, for ourselves. A smart person understands this and guards it carefully. The greats—they protect their sleep because it’s where the best state of mind comes from.”
- “Anders Ericsson, of the classic ten-thousand-hours study, found that master violinists slept eight and a half hours a night on average and took a nap most days.”

Those who seek stillness must come to . . .

- Be fully present.
- Empty our mind of preconceptions.
- Take our time.
- Sit quietly and reflect.
- Reject distraction.
- Weigh advice against the counsel of our convictions.
- Deliberate without being paralyzed.
- Develop a strong moral compass.
- Steer clear of envy and jealousy and harmful desires.
- Come to terms with the painful wounds of their childhood.
- Practice gratitude and appreciation for the world around them.
- Cultivate relationships and love in their lives.
- Place belief and control in the hands of something larger than themselves.
- Understand that there will never be “enough” and that the unchecked pursuit of more ends only in bankruptcy.
- Rise above our physical limitations.
- Find hobbies that rest and replenish us.
- Develop a reliable, disciplined routine.
- Spend time getting active outdoors.
- Seek out solitude and perspective.
- Learn to sit—to do nothing when called for.
- Get enough sleep and rein in our workaholism.
- Commit to causes bigger than ourselves.

<https://www.sloww.co>